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Many Contradictions

Spy Suspects — Portrait of a Family

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NORFOLK, Va.—Back in his heyday as a private detective and head of Counter-Spy Inc., John Anthony Walker Jr. enjoyed showing off three briefcases full of electronic equipment and explaining how his company could help corporate clients keep their secrets.

"We can detect virtually any tap or bugging device," he boasted to a local newspaper reporter in an October, 1982, interview. "This is the state of the art, except maybe for the FBI or CIA. Lord only knows what they have."

What the FBI had two years later were telephone taps that Walker did not detect—taps that court records show played a key role in helping unravel an alleged spy ring whose "all-in-the-family" flavor may be unparalleled in the annals of espionage against the United States.

Daunting Security Task

And beyond the tantalizing questions about a bizarre network of family relationships, the Walker case illuminates the daunting task faced by federal authorities as they struggle to protect material and information considered vital to national security. The U.S. defense Establishment today numbers more than 4 million military and civilian personnel with access to classified material, sensitive documents running into the tens or hundreds of millions of pages, and a labyrinth of government installations and defense contractors' facilities that stretches across the country and around the world.

Walker, 47, who became a private detective after retiring as a Navy chief warrant officer eight years ago, is accused of being the hub of an alleged spy network that included his 22-year-old son, Mi-

chael, a sailor on the U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier Nimitz, as well as his 50-year-old brother, Arthur, who began working for a defense contractor after retiring from the Navy as a lieutenant commander.

Held Without Bail

All three are in jail without bail, accused of plotting to sell Navy secrets to the Soviet Union. John Walker was arrested May 20 after agents followed him into the Maryland countryside near Washington where they said he dropped off a bag containing classified documents. His son was arrested aboard ship two days later and his brother was arrested last Wednesday at his Norfolk home.

Now, as the FBI expands its investigation to "business associates" as far away as California and as the Pentagon assesses what Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger calls a "serious loss" to national security, sketchy portraits of the Walkers are emerging from court records and interviews with associates and friends. Contradictions abound.

—John Walker often bragged of his prowess as a private eye but once got himself ensnared in a lawsuit after he allegedly posed as a priest, a bird watcher and a Boy Scout leader to snoop on the activities of someone who had filed a claim against an insurance company client. After his arrest, he asked for a court-appointed attorney, saying he earned only \$12,000 a year from his detective agency and received a \$12,000 annual Navy pension.

Besides his two-story home in an upper middle-class Norfolk neighborhood, records show that he owned a single-engine airplane, a green-and-white houseboat, a Chrysler New Yorker and a new Chevrolet Astro van. And when agents gained access to his safety deposit box, they reported finding 10 silver ingots weighing 100 ounces each and valued at about \$6,000.

—His son, an avid surfer who had been voted "best-looking" and "best-dressed" by his high school classmates, was steadily climbing the Navy's enlisted ranks and had been selected as "sailor of the month" aboard the Nimitz. But he had written home saying "if they only knew how much I hated this carrier" and, authorities report, had stashed 15 pounds of confidential Navy documents for delivery to

his father.

—John Walker's older brother, Arthur, had a flawless 20-year Navy record and was known as a civic-minded neighborhood leader and diligent employee of VSE Inc., a company providing engineering and systems analysis for Navy ships. But the FBI says Arthur Walker now has admitted that he stole secret reports disclosing what equipment was malfunctioning on U.S. warships and gave data to his brother, knowing that the information would be turned over to Soviet agents.

Both brothers had extensive submarine service and Arthur Walker spent the last five years of his Navy career as an anti-submarine warfare instructor. Naval intelligence officials are particularly concerned that he may have given the Soviets information about highly secret U.S. plans to combat Soviet submarines in case of war.

Norfolk Residents Jolted

Revelation of what quickly became known as the "all-in-the-family" spy ring has jolted residents of Norfolk and surrounding communities in the Virginia Tidewater, a cluster of cities and towns at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay where the piers are dwarfed by gray battleships, aircraft carriers and submarines, where 10 military bases have more than 100,000 active duty personnel and, where more than 20,000 military retirees live.

"I just can't comprehend it," said Carol Joyce, the wife of a former Marine who lives across the street from Arthur Walker in a quiet Virginia Beach subdivision of \$100,000 brick homes. "How anyone could serve their country but sell out is just beyond me. I guess the family just got suckered in by the money."

Money, indeed, was the driving force, the FBI says, although the amounts disclosed thus far in court papers are not large—\$35,000 cash stuffed in a paper bag that an informant said John Walker picked up on a rural Maryland roadside on one occasion 15 years ago, \$12,000 that agents said Arthur Walker admitted receiving from his brother and \$1,000 that they allege the son was given by his father in one transaction.

"More will come out about money," said one official familiar with the investigation. "We're not talk-

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ing about millions of dollars, but money seems to be the key. It's not ideology."

Espoused Strong Defense

In fact, friends and associates say, John Walker often espoused support for a stronger U.S. military and, during his 20 years in the Navy, joined in shipboard conversations "cussing the Communists."

But the FBI now says that John Walker began spying for the Soviets in 1968 as he progressed through a series of assignments both on nuclear submarines at sea and at communications and training centers in California and Virginia. His brother began cooperating with him beginning in 1980, according to FBI affidavits, and his son became involved after he enlisted in the Navy in late 1982.

Investigators have said that they doubt the son and brother knew the other was providing information to John Walker, but former colleagues recall that the three had worked together several times in the early 1980s when Counter-Spy Inc. was hired by corporate clients to check for eavesdropping devices.

"They would come into the business and pretend they were pest exterminators or carpet installers and they had all sorts of hand signals," said one former employee of the detective agency, who asked not be identified by name. "Both Michael and Art were around our office a lot, too."

Arthur Walker is identified in state records as secretary-treasurer of at least one of three companies operated by John Walker. Michael Walker's classmates also recall that he was "very close to his father" and, as one said, "was always worried about pleasing him."

It was John Walker's ex-wife, Barbara Joy Walker, who earlier this year apparently provided information that prompted the FBI to place him under surveillance and to tap his telephones.

After their divorce in 1976, Barbara Walker moved from Norfolk to Maine, where she worked for a while in a shoe factory. About 1980, Michael returned to Norfolk to live with his father and to finish his last two years of high school, and Barbara Walker eventually took a job as a clerk in West Dennis, Mass., a Cape Cod resort community where she lives with her daughter, Cynthia, in an apartment above a bookstore.

About four or five months ago, according to Chester C. Buck, a high school guidance counselor and landlord of the apartment, Barbara Walker asked his help in contacting the FBI. "I was just there one day collecting the rent when she told me she wanted to talk to the authorities about a problem. I happen to know a couple of (FBI) agents in town, and apparently Cynthia knew this."

Buck said he called the FBI but did not accompany Barbara Walker to the interview. "I just said: 'I have a lady here who has something she wants to discuss. I'll let you guys take it from here,'" Buck recalled. "She didn't reveal anything to me and I didn't ask—she just said she had something she wanted to talk to the FBI about... she wanted to tell this story to get it off her mind."

Buck said he sensed that it involved espionage but "I'm absolutely sure she didn't know about her son being involved... she was absolutely devastated when she learned about Michael."

"Her purpose was to protect her children, her family," Buck said.

Earlier Effort

He added that Barbara Walker told him she had made "some feelers" to the FBI previously and asked if she would be given protection if she provided information. The bureau apparently declined, Buck said, or otherwise "this could have been known to the FBI earlier."

FBI officials, while declining to confirm or deny that Mrs. Walker first informed them of Walker's alleged espionage, said Sunday night that they question the accuracy of Buck's comments.

Mike Wirzbarger, manager of the Christmas Tree Shops, a large souvenir and gift store in West Dennis where Barbara Walker worked for about a year, described her as a "conscientious employee who made our customers feel comfortable."

"I hope I'll have her back when the FBI finishes talking to her," he said.

John Walker, in an interview with the Norfolk Star-Ledger last week in the Baltimore jail, would not discuss his former wife except to remark: "How does that saying go? 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'"

Dated Many Women

Neighbors and employees say Walker, who sports a trim salt-and-pepper beard and wears a

toupee to cover his baldness, had dated a number of younger women, including one who is a Norfolk police officer. Sometimes, they said, he would take them flying in his plane, an 8-year-old brown-and-orange craft he kept parked at Norfolk International Airport.

An FBI search of the plane turned up aviation charts for such diverse locations as Miami and Cincinnati. Agents say when they searched Walker's home, they found hotel receipts from Mexico and Italy, as well as "assorted foreign maps."

They also reported in court documents that they discovered the "receipt portion of \$1,000 check drawn on San Diego Navy Federal Credit Union." The court documents did not indicate whether Walker had an account at the credit union or whether the check was a payment from someone else's account. Credit union officers declined to say, but investigators clearly are interested in what one called "his California connection."

During his Navy career, Walker had been stationed in both San Diego and Vallejo. And one of his former employees at the Norfolk detective agency said that once or twice a year Walker would travel to California, explaining that he was a partner in an "arcade business" and needed to "pick up the profits."

Investigators are known to be tracing Walker's contacts not only in California but also at the bustling military bases in the Norfolk area. They are, for instance, checking telephone numbers found in Walker's home and office, often scrawled on business cards or small slips of paper.

Also seized in the searches were extensive files labeled "polygraph tests," and Newsweek reported Sunday that Walker had been hired by the Navy to conduct polygraph tests on sailors suspected of misconduct. The magazine said that investigators believed that this put Walker in an ideal position to recruit vulnerable sailors for espionage.

The sensitivity of data handled by military bases and contractors in the Tidewater area cannot be underestimated, former and present officials said. One former naval officer noted that Norfolk is home of the largest communications system in the world, processing more than 50 million messages a year from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean and from the Arctic to the Antarctic.